

BEWARE OF FRANK PERETTI BOOKS

July 1, 2000 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, wayoflife.org, fbns@wayoflife.org) - The following was first published in O Timothy magazine, Volume 11, Issue 6, 1994:

Frank Peretti's novels have become phenomenal Christian best sellers. After sleeping on the shelves for the first year and a half after publication, *This Present Darkness* leaped to the top of the bestseller charts in 1988 and sold more than 400,000 copies from 1988 to 1989. The sequels, *Piercing the Darkness* and *The Prophet*, are equally popular. The books are popular in all Christian circles, including fundamental Baptist.

If the books were mere novels and nothing more, there would be no problem. The fact is that these books portray an unscriptural, charismatic type of spiritual warfare. Peretti, though writing fiction, believes the type of warfare portrayed in his books is real and biblical--BUT IT ISN'T.

Peretti is an Assemblies of God minister, and is captivated by spiritual warfare. We are told: "This spiritual warfaring fascinates Peretti; it almost consumes him these days. He carefully tracks every tidbit of information about angels and demons and the supernatural battlefield. What he discovers will be prime material for his upcoming novel..." (*Charisma*, May 1989). We see, then, that Peretti is basing his stories upon actual charismatic spiritual warfare experiences.

For sure, there is a spiritual war going on, and the Bible warns God's people to put on the whole armor of God and to engage this battle--BUT NOT IN THE WAY IT IS PORTRAYED IN PERETTI'S BOOKS, NOT IN THE WAY IT IS PROMOTED IN CHARISMATIC CIRCLES.

Consider some errors in charismatic spiritual warfare which are found in Peretti's books and speaking engagements:

REBUKING AND BINDING THE DEVIL. Charismatics believe they have the authority to rebuke all sorts of things--the devil, sickness, poverty, depression. Almost anytime you turn the television on to a charismatic program you will hear the preacher rebuking and "taking authority over" these things. The problem is that Christians don't have such authority. We are not told to rebuke the devil. On the contrary. We are warned not to bring railing accusations against the devil (Jude 8-9). Christians can't bind the devil. As much as we would like to, we can't! The devil is not bound today. He is "walking about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). He will not be bound until the coming of Christ (Rev. 20:1-3). There is also not one instance in the book of Acts and the Epistles in

which the Apostles “took authority” over sickness and poverty. On the contrary. Paul did not rebuke his infirmity in the flesh, nor did he rebuke Satan because of it; rather he accepted it as the will of God (2 Cor. 12:7-10). If Paul had been a charismatic, he would have said, “I rebuke thee, foul infirmity, in the name of Christ; I command that you depart from me; I take authority over you and banish you.” This charismatic idea of rebuking and binding the devil and taking authority over sickness and poverty is unscriptural and dangerous.

TERRITORIAL SPIRITS. In This Present Darkness there are spirits assigned to cities, churches, individuals, even buildings. This idea does not come from the Bible, but from popular charismatic warfare theology. The Bible does indicate in one passage that there are demonic powers involved with the nations (Daniel 10:12-14), and that there are wars that go on between the fallen angels and the elect angels. But this is something the Word of God does not reveal clearly. We have only this brief glimpse. The charismatic spiritual warfare proponents go far beyond this and add all sorts of imaginative teachings about territorial spirits, based not upon the Scriptures but upon supposed prophecies, angelic visitations, even conversations with demons. Leaders such as John Wimber, Charles Kraft, Peter Wagner, Larry Lee, and many others are involved in this type of thing. Wagner, a Fuller Seminary professor, referred to this in his message at the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit and World Evangelization, Indianapolis, August 1990. I reported on this meeting with press credentials for O Timothy and heard Wagner’s message:

“But 1990, the year we’re in, is the beginning of the great era of spiritual warfare. I believe that all we’ve seen about spiritual warfare has been just kindergarten, and God now in the ‘90s is going to take us up through the higher grades. We’re gonna see spiritual warfare on many different levels that we haven’t seen before. ... there is a higher level of spirits that are territorial spirits. And they are assigned by the hierarchy of evil to dominate sometimes a geographical area like a country, or a state, or a city; sometimes a cultural group; sometimes a vocational group. One of my friends said that she has discerned a spirit over the wheat industry in the United States.”

Peter Wagner speaks of an amazing array of territorial spirits, including one over the U.S. wheat industry. This is mere conjecture at best, and human conjecture has no place in theology and spiritual warfare. God has told us what He wants us to know about these things, and we are not to go beyond that which is written. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).

Here we see the danger of accepting extra-biblical revelations such as the Charismatics do. We need no other revelation. We need no prophecies, dreams, visions, or tongues. And when such are accepted, one is led into error.

ECUMENICAL PRAYER WARFARE. Charismatics are holding rallies in an effort to take authority over the devil in entire cities and nations. Peretti often speaks at these, and some of them are inspired by his books. For example, a “Prayers Over Pittsburgh” rally was first held in 1990, and more than 10,000 Christians gathered to “wage war on the powers of darkness that try to destroy our city”(Charisma, March 1991). Richard Hatch, organizer of this event, testified that “after spending time alone, out in the woods reading the book [Peretti’s first book], I felt God calling me to pray as never before and to use the radio show as a trumpet calling the troops to unite in prayer.”

Al Dager makes an important point in his review of Peretti’s book: “In spite of the Word of God to the contrary, many Christians go on rebuking rampages against the devil while refusing to administer correction to false teachers. Yet false teachers, masquerading as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:15), comprise the single most destructive element [among Christians]. Not once in Scripture do we see the apostles confronting spirits except those who manifested themselves in human agencies. When confronting false teachers, the way in which they rebuked them was by challenging them with the Word of God just as Jesus did his enemies.”

We need to pray in these evil hours and to earnestly resist the devil’s program, but it is not God’s will for us to yoke together with those who are involved in false doctrine. Ecumenical prayer is not the will of God and does not have His blessing. Contrariwise, one of the most important ways we can resist the devil is to rebuke error and ecumenical compromise.

GIVING POWER TO ANGELS THROUGH PRAYER. Peretti’s books give the impression that Christians have the ability through prayer to impart power to angels for their spiritual battles. That is not taught in Scripture. Al Dager comments on this in Spiritual Warfare--Fact or Fantasy?: “Daniel’s prayers were merely for an understanding of future events that would befall God’s people. They were not for victory over adversity. Daniel was not praying for the defeat of the prince of Persia. ... The angel’s power to defeat the prince of Persia did not depend upon Daniel’s prayers.”

DEMONS IN CHARGE OF HELL. There are all sorts of other fanciful things in Peretti’s books. Dager mentions “female angels, baby angels, pipsqueak demons, angels with wings, and demonic spirits in charge of hell.” He rightly concludes: “All these notions are elements of pagan mythology and have no basis in biblical reality.” We understand that Peretti’s books are fiction, but we remind our readers that his books are taken very seriously by the charismatic world.

Al Dager makes an important point in conclusion: "Readers of This Present Darkness should keep these things in mind so they won't be misled into thinking that Peretti's concept of spiritual warfare is scriptural. That is not to say that no elements of his writing are scriptural; some are. And they are well presented. but if his book must be read, keep in mind that it is a fantasy. Three hundred seventy-seven pages of fantasy. Long reading that might be better spent in the Word of God learning the true aspects of spiritual warfare."